CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 5 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Norberg (Sweden)

GE.98-60449 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 783rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Egypt, the Syrian Arab Republic, Romania and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Before giving the floor to the speakers inscribed for today, I should like to remind you that we will hold informal open-ended consultations immediately following this plenary meeting, first on agenda item 6, "Comprehensive programme of disarmament", and following that, agenda item 7, "Transparency in armaments", and the consultations will be held in this room.

I now invite the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran, to take the floor.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset to express to you the support of the Egyptian delegation for the informal open-ended consultations to which you referred at the beginning of this meeting, and which you are carrying out with great efficiency on the various items of our agenda with a view to the adoption of the programme of work and the commencement of the substantive work of the 1998 session in conformity with the rules of procedure.

In the general statement that I made before the Conference during its plenary meeting on 22 January, I highlighted the position of Egypt on the issues under consideration in the Conference on Disarmament. Today I have asked for the floor in order to focus on the issue of anti-personnel landmines. In my previous statement before the Conference on Disarmament I explained the concerns which prevented Egypt from signing the Ottawa treaty, namely, the responsibility of the States involved in the deployment of mines in the territories of other States for the clearance of those mines, and national defence and security concerns.

Many attempts were made to reflect these concerns in the final declaration of the CCW Review Conference and the final text of the Ottawa treaty. Unfortunately, however, neither of those documents fully addressed our concerns. I would like here to refer to the final declaration of the CCW Review Conference held in Geneva in 1996, which incorporated a general provision on the responsibility that States involved in the deployment of old mines bear for their clearance. I shall quote from this declaration the following paragraph in English; that is the text that we have available:

(continued in English)

> "Recognizing the important role that the international community, particularly States involved in the deployment of mines, can play in assisting in mine clearance in affected countries through the provision of necessary maps and information and appropriate technical and material assistance to remove or otherwise render ineffective existing minefields, mines and booby-traps."

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(continued in Arabic)

The Ottawa treaty also contained some vague provisions on mine clearance, with no reference to the responsibility of States involved in the deployment of mines for their clearance. I would like to refer, for example, to article 6, paragraph 3, of the Ottawa treaty, which reads as follows:

(continued in English)

> "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for the care and rehabilitation, and social and economic reintegration, of mine victims and for mine awareness programmes."

(continued in Arabic)

Paragraph 4 of the same article stipulates that:

(continued in English)

> "Each State Party in a position to do so shall provide assistance for mine clearance and related activities."

(continued in Arabic)

Today I would like to inform the Conference on Disarmament that, on 27 January 1998, the Executive Board of the World Health Organization adopted resolution EB.101.R23, entitled "Concerted public health action on anti-personnel mines". This resolution was adopted in view of the serious health consequences of anti-personnel landmines and the importance of developing public health programmes for anti-personnel-mine injury prevention and control. Operative paragraph 5 of the said resolution reads as follows (and I quote once again in English):

(continued in English)

> "Urges Governments that have planted mines in the territories of other countries to provide the latter with the required maps and identification of the minefields they planted and to cooperate in minefield clearance in the countries concerned so as to avoid further injuries and deaths of civilians."

(continued in Arabic)

I have asked the secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament to circulate this resolution as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

That resolution adopted by the Executive Board of the World Health Organization provides further clear confirmation that the States which planted landmines on the territories of other countries, including Egypt, must assume their responsibility in a more serious manner in the clearance operations by providing the necessary maps and information, as well as the requisite

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technical and financial resources in order to avoid further injuries and deaths among civilians, create an appropriate environment conducive to the pursuit of the economic and social development process, and prevent further human suffering.

Mr. President, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation I would like to request you to take this aspect of the question of anti-personnel landmines into consideration in your consultations on the various items of the Conference on Disarmament's agenda. The same aspect should also be fully taken into consideration in any future consultations or negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on the question of anti-personnel landmines.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Al-Hussami.

Mr. AL-HUSSAMI (Syrian Arab Republic) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, it gives my country's delegation pleasure to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are confident that the contributions of your friendly country, Sweden, in the field of disarmament and in international cooperation, as well as your own competence and wide experience, will help to surmount any obstacles that the Conference might encounter and will pave the way for the progress that we are hoping to achieve in our work. My country's delegation would also like to take this opportunity to commend the diligent efforts made by your predecessor, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, Mr. Goonetilleke, during the last session. We highly appreciate the attention accorded to our work by the Secretary-General of our Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, with the help of the Conference secretariat. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the new ambassadors, hoping that their valuable contributions will promote a creative consensus conducive to the success of our work.

Before discussing our agenda, my country's delegation would like to stress the vital importance of the Conference on Disarmament as the sole international negotiating forum in this field. The Conference may have been slow in addressing the issues of international disarmament because those issues are highly complex, sensitive and important and because the possession or relinquishment of weapons could affect security and peace at the national, regional and international levels. However, this slowness does not give cause to describe the Conference with various terms that inhibit our aspirations and resolve, nor does it justify steps to circumvent or bypass the Conference, for the simple reason that the Conference is us, the States members thereof. Some amongst us are armed to the teeth with the most dangerous weapons, while others are not only unable to acquire weapons for self-defence but lack even the technology needed for peaceful uses.

Our rules of procedure call for consensus. This consensus, in turn, necessitates agreement on a scale of priorities and the manifestation of political will on the part of everyone, as well as a belief in the principles

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of equality among States, respect for their sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and prohibition of the use of force or the threat to use force in international relations. In particular, it requires belief in the principles of justice and equity, especially on the part of the most highly and most dangerously armed, because it is the party in possession of the force to threaten and destroy. There are important reasons for our emphasis on the need to invigorate the Conference on Disarmament and on the principles that should govern this invigoration. Let us consider the principal international instruments in the field of disarmament, including those formulated before the Conference was established, those sponsored by the Conference and those which the Conference tried to tackle but was prevented from so doing.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, known as the NPT, was adopted 30 years ago. However, throughout that long period of time the nuclear States have failed to take the necessary steps to fulfil their obligations under article VI of the treaty. Proliferation has continued, to the extent that we find ourselves faced with a new type of State, the nuclear armed State. Then, the Conference to review and extend the duration of the treaty was held in New York in 1995, not in order to rectify its shortcomings or to call to account those who had failed to honour their obligations but, unfortunately, solely to decide to extend the duration of the treaty for ever, without any provision obliging the nuclear States to get rid of their arsenals within a specified time limit, nor was there any provision for a deadline to achieve the universality of the treaty. Consequently, instead of tightening the prohibition of nuclear proliferation, it actually facilitated this proliferation. This prompts us to ask: in the light of those serious shortcomings, how can the non-nuclear parties assume the sole responsibility for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons? The same also applies to the other important international instruments on disarmament, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (the CTBT) and the international Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines.

For years, the international community has been hoping that international instruments would be adopted to protect it from the dangers of such arms. Some imagined that those instruments had fulfilled their aspirations. In reality, however, those instruments contain flaws that have prevented my country and many other countries from acceding to them. These flaws are dangerous because they imply bias, discrimination and a denial of legitimate security concerns at the national, regional and international levels. The control of any weapon should be completely watertight; otherwise, in practice, the instrument governing its control would remain ink on paper, especially if the weapon concerned was one of mass destruction. Moreover, where is the sound logic in requiring States to renounce small, defensive weapons before requiring them to renounce the most lethal weapons of mass destruction? This can be interpreted only as an attempt to enable the strong to remain strong and to deny any strength to the weak.

That is why we stress the need to promote positive dialogue in this important international forum, a dialogue that will enable us to take

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coherent, firm, viable and enforceable decisions which we can submit to the international community with confidence that our peoples - all our peoples - will welcome them with satisfaction.

Mr. President, the reason that prompted us to state the above was the desire which you yourself expressed and which was also referred to by the representatives who spoke before me - that is to say, the desire and the determination to invigorate the Conference, reaffirm its mandate and tackle its issues with flexibility. We all agree that the time has come to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We have before us a number of proposals that define the nature and the mandate of this ad hoc committee. Since this issue is at the top of our scale of priorities, our success or failure therein will inevitably have a positive or negative effect on our approach to other subjects. What we would like to say is that the goal is not just to establish the ad hoc committee or a committee whose task is merely to deliberate. Our goal is to establish a committee that will enjoy a substantive mandate and a timetable as provided for in United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 L and which will embody the aspiration of peoples, including the peoples of the nuclear States themselves.

I represent a developing State working for peace, not for aggression. My Government's primary concern is to meet our people's need to defend their land, their existence and their achievements. However, part of the territory of my homeland has been suffering for decades under military occupation, and the occupying Power possesses the largest arsenal in the region, an arsenal containing weapons of all types and of the most modern technology and, above all, the most dangerous of weapons of mass destruction, namely nuclear arms. Moreover, the borders of my country are long and need to be protected against infiltrators, saboteurs and smugglers. Therefore, the ranking of my priorities in the area of disarmament is obvious and easily understandable.

My country was among the first States that signed and subsequently ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) of 1968. What happened then? Eventually, all the countries of the region acceded to the treaty, except Israel, which acquired nuclear arms with impunity and with the full knowledge of the entire international community, and now possesses three nuclear reactors for military purposes and about 200 nuclear bombs. Today, it threatens the whole region with the most modern and dangerous arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Syria has also signed an inspection and safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), while Israel continues to refuse to sign such an agreement or to allow IAEA inspectors to inspect the Israeli nuclear installations. For years, Syria, together with the Arab countries of the region, has been calling for the Middle East to be declared a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, while Israel is doing nothing to achieve such a goal, because it is the only nuclear State in the region and is seeking to preserve its nuclear arms monopoly in order to continue to occupy Arab land, impose its hegemony and dictate its terms.

Where is the Conference on Disarmament in all of this? What is its position? It has remained silent. Rather, I should say that we hear voices,

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but voices which surprise us, voices which call upon us to renounce the weakest weapon with which we can protect the borders of our homeland, namely mines. Then there are other voices calling upon us to accede to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which is unable even to discharge its basic function because it disregards the question of the manufacture and production of those weapons, in the same way as it has disregarded other types of more lethal and devastating weapons, such as weapons of mass destruction, to the extent that transparency therein does not allow us to see more than the tip of the iceberg on the surface of the ocean.

We are neither engaged in the nuclear arms race nor in the race to militarize outer space or exploit it for espionage purposes. It is not we who are endeavouring to produce fissionable materials for military purposes. The responsibility of the States concerned is clear in these matters. We would welcome any progress that the Conference on Disarmament might achieve in this regard or in regard to the adoption of effective international arrangements to assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons against them. Rest assured, Mr. President, that our primary concern is to cooperate with you in order to strengthen the mandate of this Conference with a view to saving future generations from the scourge of war.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, Mr. Grecu.

Mr. GRECU (Romania): Mr. President, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you most sincerely on your assumption of the important office of President of the Conference on Disarmament. It is true that every commencement of a new session constitutes a challenging endeavour for the presidency of this body. But you and your team are working admirably well to pave the way for tangible progress and deserve our full praise and support. Please rest assured of my delegation's full cooperation. You are assisted by a very competent and devoted secretariat, to which I would like to pay tribute and wish every success in this 1998 session.

Let me also express Romania's appreciation to your predecessor, the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, for a job well done, and address a warm welcome to our new colleagues who have joined us recently in the Conference.

At the dawn of a new millennium, the world has been given an historic chance to build democratic and effective international structures able to develop international relations in adherence to certain fundamental principles, such as undiminished security for all nations, the resolution of disputes by peaceful means, cooperation, transparency and openness, allegiance to arms control and confidence-building measures. If we look back at the period that has elapsed since 1990, the assessment is convincingly clear: as one of the top priorities of the global agenda, the process of arms control and disarmament has seized that historic opportunity and, through accomplishments so far, solid ground has been laid for future, durable progress.

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In the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, "with the end of the super-Power rivalry, nations everywhere have come to recognize their stake in the success of multilateral negotiations and the monitoring of weapons developments". Important treaties of universal vocation have been concluded, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and existing arms control regimes have been strengthened or are in the process of being improved in terms of efficiency and enforcement mechanisms, as in the case of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), respectively. During these years freed from ideological confrontation, disarmament has also advanced unilaterally, on a bilateral basis or within regional frameworks.

There is no doubt that the CD has played a pivotal role in the post-cold-war process of disarmament and of enhancing security. Regrettably, however, the Conference came under sharp criticism as it was unable to start concrete negotiations immediately after the completion of the CTBT in 1996. Although the CD could have done better than spend the whole of last year's session with little result, my delegation strongly believes that its relevance and credibility should not be questioned. One too often forgets that the Conference, as has been rightly pointed out, is not necessarily a "treaty factory", producing a legal instrument every two years, but rather a forum of dialogue for promoting global security through cooperation and mutual understanding, engaging itself in negotiations only when the issues are consensually deemed ripe to that end. This is why I am inclined to name 1997 no less than a year of reflection, better information among delegations, and laying the ground for a more propitious juncture.

Will 1998 be the session of such a juncture? Is the political will going to re-emerge and break the deadlock looming over yet another session? My delegation earnestly hopes so and will try to do its utmost to this end.

Romania's priorities in 1998 regarding the CD are clear-cut: we expect the Conference to start negotiations on a fissile material "cut-off" treaty (FMCT) and to take the necessary steps towards the universalization of the recently signed Ottawa Convention on the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

My Government shares the view that a "cut-off" treaty should be the next logical approach in the ongoing process of nuclear disarmament, after the completion of the CTBT. It has been written down in the documents of the NPT Review and Extension Conference, endorsed by consensus by more than 180 States less than three years ago. For its part, Romania prefers to stick to the 1995 agreement. We reiterate our firm conviction that the FMCT will cap the amount of fissile materials available for explosive military purposes not only in nuclear-weapons States, but also in those States which currently have unsafeguarded enrichment or reprocessing plants. It will contribute to ensuring the conditions under which the process of nuclear disarmament can broaden, will constrain the opportunities for vertical proliferation and help prevent any future resumption of the nuclear arms race.

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We only regret that, despite broad international support, negotiations on a "cut-off" treaty have not yet begun in the CD. It is our strong hope that in 1998 the Conference will lay aside unproductive linkages and conditions, and will be able to reach a consensus along the lines contained in the March 1995 mandate.

On nuclear disarmament, for Romania, too, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the supreme objective towards building a safer world for the generations to come. My country warmly welcomes the efforts by both the United States and Russia to dismantle their strategic weapons delivery systems, which we understand are well ahead of the schedule provided for by START I. The ratification of START II by the United States Senate constitutes yet another encouraging step on the road towards a more dramatic reduction of strategic offensive weapons, which we hope will be followed by a similar gesture from the competent Russian authorities. It is undeniable that the achievements so far are impressive. Unthinkable just 10 years ago, they have indicated a viable, realistic and concrete path to follow. As agreed by Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin during their March 1997 Helsinki summit, once START II enters into force, the United States and the Russian Federation will begin negotiations on a START III agreement. We share the view that entry into force and implementation of START II and achieving START III will make a major contribution towards the ultimate goal of all NPT parties of a world free of nuclear weapons and the threat of war.

The other substantive issue my country would like to see negotiated within the CD's current session refers to anti-personnel landmines (APLs). Last December, in Ottawa, Romania signed the "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction". Apart from humanitarian considerations, this was largely the result of the internal reassessment of my country's military doctrine from a communitarian perspective rather than from a national viewpoint, engaging in cooperative security enhancement endeavours as part of a stability-fostering policy in its region and beyond. As a logical consequence, we view our commitment to this Convention as both politically and morally binding. We believe that the military issues characterized as disadvantages by our own domestic critics of this decision will become entirely meaningless once Romania reaches its target of Euro-Atlantic integration by the end of this millennium.

The conclusion of the Ottawa Convention not only stands out as a humanitarian achievement, but also brings to fruition an important arms control and disarmament measure. Albeit these considerations, we should not hold on to its fulfilment only in the framework of like-minded States, but venture beyond it by reaching those countries which still rely on APLs to enhance their defence capabilities. This is why, in Romania's view, the success of the Ottawa Process should stimulate discussion on the APLs issue within the Conference on Disarmament, thus providing wider involvement, enabling a broader implementation of its final product. The Conference on Disarmament is a forum with large representation and valuable expertise, within which participate countries with significant mine-producing

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capabilities, States in regions of tension, as well as States where APLs are still being retained as a military option. We therefore see complementarity, not conflict, between the Ottawa Convention and the CD's work on landmines.

In this spirit, Romania co-sponsored the recently adopted United Nations General Assembly resolution 52/38 H, entitled "Contributions towards banning anti-personnel landmines", which invites the Conference on Disarmament to intensify its efforts on the issue of APLs. We believe an appropriate response to that invitation could be the reappointment of a Special Coordinator on landmines, entrusted to build upon the accomplishments so far, and to prepare the ground for a rapid establishment of an ad hoc committee to launch substantive negotiations in this field. As recently suggested by President Clinton, the first goal of such negotiations could be a worldwide ban on the export of APLs, which Romania believes is entirely feasible for the CD to achieve and in line with the objective of making the Ottawa regime universal.

Proclaiming our national objectives for the 1998 session does not mean that my delegation will oppose debating other aspects of interest on the agenda. On the contrary, we would be very pleased to see consensus emerging on the issue of transparency in armaments (TIA). Despite the fact that conventional weapons inflict so great a toll in conflicts and human suffering worldwide, unfortunately the matter has long evaded the Conference, being overshadowed by nuclear issues. The time has come to strike a more equitable balance and, as the international community expects, acknowledge the importance conventional armaments have in terms of peace and security.

Among the topics that deserve consideration within that framework is the idea of a "code of conduct" in conventional arms transfers. Romania is proud to have introduced, within the CD, an official proposal in this respect, together with a draft code, under the symbol CD/1257. Such an instrument is intended to bring about restraint and responsibility both of exporters and recipients. It also envisages the maintenance of equal and undiminished security of States at the lowest levels of armaments. Basic principles of conduct, criteria to be followed in considering arms transfers or in avoiding arms transfers, respectively, as well as an appropriate mechanism of data sharing and consultations, should be examined equally when discussing an international instrument of this kind.

It is my delegation's hope that a debate on TIA will begin this session, and proposals such as the "code of conduct" will be duly taken into consideration.

Romania could also join a consensus on starting concrete work on negative security assurances (NSA) and prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), as well as on other topics of interest to delegations around this table.

Procedural issues, such as the agenda, improved and effective functioning and membership could also be dealt with to the general benefit of the CD, its relevance and efficiency. Nearly a decade after the end of the cold war the issue of reviewing the agenda is particularly acute, as is the bloc politics of which the current agenda is much too accurate a mirror. The

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aim of the process should be a new agenda better-tuned to the present international climate and its tendencies, as well as to the aspirations in the field of disarmament of various countries represented at the CD. Moreover, the agenda should constitute a stimulus to follow those tendencies in order to achieve commonly shared goals and aspirations. In brief, it should be a reflection of the present, and not a consecration of the past, and it should inspire, rather than inhibit, our work. And perhaps, before anything else, it should be more focused and far shorter.

There are indeed opportunities for good, useful work here in the Conference.

Let me conclude by saying that Romania will participate at this 1998 CD session with hope and determination - with hope that the Conference will reinvigorate faith in its innate mission, while adapting itself to changing circumstances and demands; with determination to contribute, along with partner countries from NATO and the European Union, and in cooperation with all member States of the Conference, to our common success in fulfilling global security imperatives.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Romania for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ambassador Khorram.

Mr. KHORRAM (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference. Given your experience and qualification in multilateral diplomacy, I am certain that under your presidency we will be able to find a solution to the difficulties facing the Conference, including its programme of work. I should also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Conference, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, and his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, for their valuable services to the work of the Conference.

At the threshold of the third millennium, a new international civil society is taking shape in which the concept of "power" is undergoing a drastic change. Power no longer can, nor should, be derived from possession of weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons. Though seeming almost impossible due, by and large, to long-standing mindsets, such a society should be based on "the power of law" rather than "the law of power", a society whose very existence requires the maintenance and strengthening of regional and international peace and security. I do not intend to portray a rosy picture. What I am driving at is the fact that, in spite of all the difficulties involved, there is now a compelling need for a change in the status quo.

Some may, for various political considerations, attempt to contend otherwise or cast doubts on the view shared by a large majority of members of the international community.

However, we should not forget the dreadful consequences of the two world wars: balance of terror, numerous regional conflicts, genocide, ethnic

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cleansing and occupation. These are not the challenges of the past. There exists at any moment the possibility of a recurrence of these nightmares.

The CD, as the sole multilateral negotiating body for disarmament, has a vital and indispensable role in ensuring international peace and security. Its contributions to this objective are even greater than before. It is also as relevant as at the time of its inception. Even if the CD were non-existent, we would have to create it, for its absence, marginalization or inaction would have dangerous consequences for the world.

In the last couple of weeks, since commencement of its 1998 session, some delegations have contended that the CD is undergoing an important test; it is facing a "crisis", a "stalemate" or a "deadlock". Some have gone so far as to call into question the capacity of the CD to deal with nuclear disarmament, or to name rivals for it. This is all to monopolize disarmament negotiations at a time of open calls for multilateralism in disarmament negotiations. Not intending to oppose these contentions, I believe that it is the CD which has put its members to the test, and that we have a common responsibility to ensure its effectiveness by addressing the security concerns of the international community.

Having said that, let me now touch upon the question of the programme of work of the Conference. Disagreement on the CD's programme of work, as previously seen, is surmountable. We should not lose heart at the slow pace of progress in this regard. While underscoring the significance of political will and flexibility, I view that our deliberations and discussions on this issue provide better understanding, which is essential for achieving a consensus programme of work.

With the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its entry into force, as well as the prospective conclusion of negotiations on an additional protocol to the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), two categories of weapons of mass destruction would be under effective international monitoring and control. What concerns us most is the fact that nuclear weapons, the deadliest of all, are unbridledly developed and upgraded. An initiative for total elimination of these weapons is to be launched so as to wipe out the impending threats of nuclear weapons, a required step in the right direction of a world free of fear, as called for in the United Nations Charter.

The question of nuclear disarmament has always been top of the United Nations agenda. The Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), despite all its shortcomings, provides, in article VI, for negotiations aimed at effective measures for nuclear disarmament. As the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, put it in 1968: "The Treaty is not an end in itself but a step toward disarmament". The recent far-reaching changes in the world have necessitated the urgent need for genuine multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In this context, the CD's contribution, as the most appropriate forum for such an initiative in terms of expertise and mandate, cannot be ignored. That is why we strongly support any initiative bringing balance to the programme of work of the Conference. Trifling with this important mandate would only undermine the credibility and relevance of the

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Conference. Notwithstanding, this should not be construed as an attempt to rule out the possibility of complementary efforts, including, inter alia, bilateral measures in nuclear weapons reduction.

In this regard, I would like to state that the Islamic Republic of Iran welcomes South Africa's proposal for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. But it believes that the mandate and the functions of the ad hoc committee should not be confined to deliberations only. Existing proposals and future initiatives should be taken into account in defining the mandate of the ad hoc committee.

We are much heartened at seeing that a compromise on the programme of work is imminent. Decisions on re-establishment of an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances (NSA), as well as appointment of a special coordinator on prevention of an arms race in outer space (PAROS), would certainly make us roll up our sleeves and start substantive work. But that is not all. The ad hoc committee on NSA should, unlike its experience in 1994, focus on substantive issues so as to facilitate early negotiation on a legally binding instrument. Moreover, mindful of the military uses of outer space that constitute enormous threats to international peace and security, our efforts should not stop at appointing a special coordinator on PAROS. As a further step, serious thoughts should be given to the revival of the ad hoc committee on PAROS.

Where there is a will, there is a way. An active and progressive CD is not out of reach, provided that political will and commitment towards real disarmament are available. Time is of the essence. The coming generations will never forgive us if we do not seize the emerging opportunities.

These are my preliminary remarks on the question of the programme of work of the CD, and I intend to elaborate on the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran at an opportune time.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor?

I should now like to take up for decision the request from Jordan to participate in the work of the Conference as an observer. This request is contained in document CD/WP.494, which is before you. May I take it that this request is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: This concludes our business for today. Before adjourning the meeting I remind you that, as I said when we started this meeting, we will hold informal consultations in this room, and we will start in 10 minutes' time, at 11.20 a.m. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 12 February 1998, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.